

Testimony in support of: HB 6633

Co-chairs and member of the committee, my name is Hugh Blumenfeld. I live in the town of Andover and I work as a physician in the city of Hartford.

I am writing in support of Fair Share Legislation, House Bill 6633.

This bill redresses a century of wrongs. From the discriminatory administration of GI Bill benefits to Red Lining, discriminatory and predatory lending programs, exclusionary property deeds, and zoning laws designed to limit affordable housing available in suburbs, there has been a systematic attempt to relegate indigent people and people of color to urban neighborhoods with aging housing stock, inferior services including schools, and environmental hazards. The result is that Connecticut is one of the most segregated states in the country, and while it is the wealthiest, it is also home to 3 of the country's poorest cities. It is only recently that, through my involvement with the Open Communities Alliance, I learned that this shameful state of affairs is no accident of history but an intentional attempt to

This affects me personally in two ways.

First, as a resident of Andover, I live in a very segregated neighborhood and my children attended almost exclusively segregated schools. This is not healthy for my family's culture or my children's education. Current zoning laws make it virtually impossible to build affordable housing there, and that limits the kind of economic and cultural diversity that makes a true democracy work.

Second, as a physician in Hartford I see the result of segregation on the mental and physical health of my patients. Because of the way that schools in Connecticut are funded and the way that town borders are drawn, my pediatric patients get an inferior education to children in suburban schools just a few miles away. Limited literacy dooms them to a lifetime of medical problems, the poor air quality causes my black and Latinx patients to have much higher rates and increased severity of asthma, the paucity of healthy affordable foods and the unavoidability of higher priced unhealthy food causes higher rates of obesity and diabetes and all the complications that go with these conditions, and then there is the death toll of poor-on-poor crime. The life expectancy in some neighborhoods in Hartford is 69. In the wealthiest suburbs it is in the mid 80s.

How must it feel to wake up every day knowing your children are attending inferior schools, getting a barely adequate education, while other children nearby are taking AP Latin and Calculus? How must it feel to wake up knowing that because of where you live, because of where your parents and your grandparents were forced to live, your life and the lives of your children will be cut short by 15 years? I don't have to imagine it, because I see it every day. I diagnose and treat diabetes and asthma and high blood pressure and cancer at alarming rates and often at tragically young ages.

In short, the Fair Share Legislation benefits all residents of Connecticut, but especially those who need the kind of affordable housing that has been so limited in areas outside out biggest cities. For many it is literally a matter of life and death.

For all these reasons, I support Fair Share Planning and Zoning.

Sincerely,
Hugh Blumenfeld MD
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